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AFGHANISTAN

FACT SHEET

Balkh Province

OVERVIEW

USAID estimated support to Balkh from January 2002 - June 2011: \$185.1 million

Estimated population: 1,144,800 (Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Central Statistics Office: Estimated Population of Afghanistan 2008-2009)

Capital: Mazari Sharif

Note: Swedish-led PRT



The ancient province of Balkh has been the center of a variety of religious traditions, from Zoroastrianism, Greek pantheism, and Hinduism to Buddhism and Islam. The bulk of the province's rural areas remain fertile, and the re-establishment of the tube-well irrigation system has revived Balkh's agricultural market. The mainly Tajik population has a relatively high rate of literacy, and despite 30 years of war, the province has a substantial number of functioning hospitals, schools, and roads. The region has also greatly benefited from the establishment of micro-finance cooperatives and the development of robust legal and governance institutions.

AGRICULTURE

Goal: Increase agricultural sector jobs and income through a) increased agricultural productivity by increasing farmer access to inputs and effective extension services; b) invigorated agribusiness by increasing linkages between farmers, markets, credit, and trade corridors; and c) rehabilitated watersheds and improved irrigation infrastructure. Also, increase Afghans' confidence in their government by increased Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock's (MAIL) capacity to deliver services and promote the private sector and farmer associations through direct budget and technical assistance.

Summary: USAID focuses on preparing farmers to participate in a modern agricultural economy through improved agricultural opportunities, veterinary services, improved irrigation, and training.

Current Activities:

- Provide agriculture education opportunities for students and faculty members of Balkh University through curriculum development through strengthening the capacity of the faculty members, farm research activities, and demonstration plots for students and faculty, and English language courses
- Facilitate the establishment of a soil laboratory in partnership with Balkh University to provide farmers with guidance on growing crops on specific soils
- Conduct capacity-building activities on efficient use of water for irrigation, such as demonstrations on different types of irrigation systems and measuring water available for irrigation, complemented by classroom and on-farm training on improved agriculture technologies for MAIL and Ministry of Energy and Water staff, students, and faculty members of Balkh University, and members of the *mirab* (collective water management system)
- Provide accessible and affordable agricultural inputs – improved seed varieties and fertilizer – and promote the increased production of wheat, while building the capacity of the emerging private sector seed industry and input supply system



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- Establish demonstration plots of wheat and forage crops and training of farmers to identify appropriate agricultural technologies to increase agricultural productivity in areas subject to seasonal drought and high risks of land degradation, deforestation, or loss of biodiversity
- Rehabilitate upper watersheds (250 hectares of land)
- Create full-time jobs from irrigation system repair activities
- Train farmers to use improved methods of cultivation and achieve an increase in yields over previous methods
- Conduct women's silkworm and wool training and market development for women
- Strengthen the network of agricultural retailers to ensure the sustainable availability of high-quality inputs and develop extension services able to improve basic orchard management
- Facilitate the installation of a modern fruit and vegetable packing facility with cold storage rooms on a shared-cost basis agreement with an Afghan company
- Establish associations and provide training and equipment to strengthen existing AgDepots
- Provide training, assist in awareness campaigns, and link existing Veterinary Field Units to high-quality medicines and vaccines

Accomplishments:

- Funded Balkh University agricultural research projects
- Established a soil laboratory at Balkh University for use by farmers and students
- Brought 85,000 hectares of land under improved natural resource management and trained eight staff of the provincial Agriculture Department in natural resource management
- Constructed or rehabilitated 130 km of farm-to-market roads, significantly decreasing transport time for farmers and providing employment and training for local workers
- Funded eight micro-credit institutions to assist in restoring rural financial systems and encourage commercial banks to extend revolving agricultural loans for agribusiness
- Rehabilitated two canals and constructed the Samar Kandian Cross-River Weir (low-head dam) to provide a reliable water supply to farmers
- Developed infrastructure at the Mazari Sharif fairgrounds and held two agriculture fairs (AgFairs) to promote northern Afghanistan's agricultural products and facilitate trade
- Trained National Environmental Protection Agency officials on participatory natural resource management topics, which included encouraging cultural leaders to incorporate environmental messages into their communications with the public
- Installed eight farm turnouts
- Established 64 demonstration plots of wheat and forage crops and trained 686 farmers
- Trained 178 staff members of the Afghan government, universities, and agricultural vocational schools in irrigation and agricultural production technologies
- Trained more than 25,500 farmers on melon fly control
- Established 19 AgDepots
- Supported 33 Veterinary Field Units (private businesses that provide preventive animal health and treatment services to rural communities) that vaccinated 260,902 animals, treated 2,042,672 animals, and generated \$122,000 in gross sales
- Provided support in packing, sorting, technical assistance, customs, cargo, and linkages between local and international buyers for 106 metric tons of fresh fruit valued at \$64,000
- Created linkages between Afghan farmers, traders, and the Afghan government, and provided a venue to discuss activities, challenges, and lessons learned



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- Organized a road show in Mazari Sharif for farmers, herders, and traders as well as government officials, and other agriculture stakeholders
- Implemented cash-for-work projects that have employed more than 13,000 workers and have provided rural families in Balkh Province with much needed income

DEMOCRACY & GOVERNANCE

Goal: Build the capacity of government institutions to improve the quality of government services to Afghan citizens. Support independent media institutions and advocacy groups.

Summary: USAID supports building the capacity of government institutions and civil-society in Balkh Province through activities that assist the justice sector, media, and civil-society.

Current Activities:

- Support two radio stations
- Provide capacity building training to civil-society organizations
- Train provincial- and district-level civil servants in the five common functions highlighted in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy
- Provide institutional capacity development and advocacy support to women-focused Afghan civil-society organizations
- Provide technical assistance to political parties and political party leaders through training
- Support the development of issue based coalitions and parliamentary caucuses to help members of parliament develop and coordinate parliamentary groupings
- Continue to support the development and outreach efforts of civil-society organizations of dedicated to advancing women's rights in Afghanistan through democratic processes
- Train youth and students in advocacy and journalism
- Support accountable municipal governance, improved municipal delivery of public services, and improved generation and management of municipal revenue in provincial capitals
- Provide the provincial governor with operational resources and money for community outreach and micro projects to support his needs and serve as incentive to develop
- Develop the human and institutional capacity of the courts, increasing access to justice particularly for women, developing and implementing a case tracking system including professional training for judges and administrators on the system

Accomplishments:

- Supported justice sector development through the publication and distribution of Judicial Reference Law sets, a 17-volume collection of laws, to 83 judges in the province
- Developed and trained all of Balkh's judges and court administrators in the new Afghanistan Court Administration System, a case-management system that improves the courts' ability to manage cases and provide due process, leading to more effective and transparent rule of law
- Supported justice sector development through a one-month Foundation Training Program for 67 sitting judges and a one-year Supreme Court-mandated Stage Judicial Training Program for 29 judicial candidates, providing judges with access to the tools necessary to officiate over the courts
- Assisted the Supreme Court in drafting a new ethics code for all judges and provided training for all of Afghanistan's judges in the contents and importance of the code



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- Built a provincial judicial facility, a new provincial Court of Appeals, and an integrated provincial facility for prosecutors and Ministry of Justice personnel
- Promoted legal and human rights awareness, including women's rights, through public education campaigns in a variety of media, thereby making information accessible even to those who cannot read
- Facilitated consensus-building efforts through civic education training and dialogue sessions with mullahs and sharia teachers, improving professionalism, knowledge, and local leadership skills
- Supported the 2008 voter registration exercise, assisted domestic and international observation missions, trained political parties and independent poll agents, conducted a series of poll surveys ahead of the elections, and ultimately helped conduct the 2009/2010 elections
- Established two radio stations
- Provided capacity building training and technical assistance to 13 civil-society organizations
- Coordinated, educated, and directed the provincial council and provincial government representatives to participate in the Afghan national budget execution and program implementation work shop
- Trained 575 civil servants in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy
- Awarded 100 grants

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Goal: Create a developed business climate that enables private investment, job creation, and financial independence.

Summary: USAID's economic growth program helps the Afghan government develop sound economic governance and works with the private sector to stimulate investment and business opportunities. USAID partners with Afghans and the Afghan government to attract investment, generate sustainable employment, and expand market linkages. USAID also promotes economic development through introducing program budgeting, improving the capacity of the Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB), reorganizing land titling documentation, expanding access to telecommunications, and supporting business associations.

Current Activities:

- Assist the Private Sector Development – Sectoral Committee (PSD-SC) in promoting economic development to improve conditions for the private-sector through implementation of interventions identified in Balkh Private Sector Development (PSD) strategy
- Assist the Afghanistan Central Business Registry (ACBR) to refine their activities, including payment process, as an element of further streamlining their procedures
- Assist in the implementation of additional strategic interventions defined in the PSD strategy
- Assist DAB to facilitate periodic roundtable meetings with local private bank managers to discuss private banking issues, future banking expansion plans, and other improvements to increase access to private banking services to the local community
- Support DAB to establish the Survey of Regional Economic Activity
- Support DAB to organize and conduct quarterly Financial Sector Consultation Forums focused on issue identification and resolution of financial sector operations, economic development and growth, and provincial action to advance Afghanistan National Development Strategy objectives
- Assist DAB to implement financial sector supervisory and economic research and analysis functions, strengthening DAB regional contributions to core central bank functions
- Create a business enabling environment by establishing the Balkh branch of the ACBR, a one-stop-shop for business registration to reduce corruption and the time required to register a new firm



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- Support the revenue reconciliation team of the Balkh Mustofiat
- Promote improved cash management operations with regard to availability and quality of bank notes in circulation
- Assist the Medium Taxpayer Office in refining their procedures and increasing revenues collected from taxpayers
- Assist the Ministry of Finance in implementing provincial budgeting by assisting line directorates in developing inputs to the budget
- Continue support to the “Women in Government” internship program placing female interns in government organizations
- Provide support to the Hairatan Customs to implement streamlined customs procedures
- Provide grants to small businesses and associations to strengthen Afghanistan’s business community, facilitate business growth, and enable associations to serve their members through training and business registration assistance
- Construct pavilions in Takhar grain market
- Support a community-owned and managed Islamic investment and finance cooperative, which provides financial services to members
- Support the food industry through a Global Development Alliance (GDA) to establish storage facility for raw materials
- Support a candy production company through a GDA to improve financial management

Accomplishments:

- Expanded and refurbished the provincial branch of DAB, implemented an automated Core Banking System, and installed a training center and additional communications technology for bank staff that operates as the paying agent for the government and disburses all social, payroll, and procurement payments
- Assisted the Mazar-i Sharif Inland Customs Depot move to the EU-financed new customs facility at the Uzbek border in Hairatan
- Installed the Revenue Reconciliation and Accounting database in the Balkh Mustofiat, which has dramatically reduced processing times of Afghan government revenue receipts, production on revenue reports, and uploading into the consolidated Ministry of Finance Financial Management System
- Launched an agricultural processing facility for drying tomatoes through a grant to local company Osiyo Hamkorlik that will enable farmers to earn steady, lawful income through tomato cultivation
- Launched the ACBR and provided technical and financial support, training for staff, and installation of equipment for easier business registration, reduction of corruption and reducing time required to register a new firm with provided technical and financial support, training for staff, and installation of equipment
- Conducted an information campaign in all Northern Provinces covered by ACBR Mazar-i Sharif
- Updated the map of the entire city of Mazar-i Sharif to expand land tenure formalization activities that included the purchase of recent satellite imagery, collection of GPS ground control points, and the on-screen digitization of more than 50,000 property parcels
- Assisted the DAB zone office in collecting information about banking organizations and creating a database, which will be a basis to perform control functions at provincial level
- Assisted the DAB zone office in conducting a survey of financial sector activities in Mazari Sharif and developed a financial sector activity database in DAB, which enables the zone office to keep and maintain financial sector data/information



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- Assisted the PSD-SC to conduct a business survey, provide input to strategic planning process, and develop an economic profile of the Balkh economy, to promote economic development and improve conditions for the private-sector
- Assisted the PSD-SC in developing the first PSD Strategy (an input to the newly developed Balkh Provincial Strategic Plan), which defines areas of improvements in the business enabling environment and outlines interventions to address them
- Conducted a banking survey to determine basic banking habits of the public, including the extent that bank accounts are used and whether banks were used for changing money, and gauge the interest in obtaining bank loans to start new businesses or purchase homes
- Conducted outreach to journalists, university students and professors, government officials, business representatives and provincial council members on the benefits and requirements of the Afghanistan/Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement and its potential impact on the local and national economies
- Constructed Gorimar Industrial Park, which provides a modern, well-managed area for doing business
- Educated businesspeople, government officials, and women entrepreneurs on the South Asia Free Trade Agreement and other pending trade agreements, and updated commercial laws to enable Afghanistan's business community to operate more effectively under international trade regulations
- Established five Islamic investment and finance cooperatives with approximately 14,500 members (20.9 percent women)
- Disbursed more than \$11.9 million in sharia-compliant loans
- Implemented the Revenue Reconciliation Database at Balkh Mustofiat to capture revenue data and provide inputs to the Afghan Financial Information Management System
- Improved city sanitation through the provision of 60 locally produced trash cans
- Installed five district communications network centers and one Village Communications Network, operated by Afghan Telecom, that provide telephones, internet, and photocopying services to district government officials and the public
- Promoted economic expansion and private-sector development through lending to a variety of businesses in the micro, small, and medium enterprise sector that received \$23.8 million
- Provided a value chain Improvement grant to the Etefaq Dawlatabad Carpet Production Company used to procure 61 carpet looms, an electric generator, benches, posters, and brochures that benefit 220 carpet weavers
- Provided an Association Development grant to the Turkmen Women's Active Rights Association used to set up a carpet production facilities in Shortepa District
- Provided training to customs staff in customs law, customs declarations, valuation and tariffs, data entry, and preparation of trade statistics to build a professional, modern customs authority
- Reorganized land titling documentation at the Makhzan court register with new cost-efficient technology allowing Afghans to easily access their property documents (before the reorganization, the land administration office was unable to properly document land transfers, provide proof of ownership documents, or prevent the registration of fraudulent deeds)
- Trained 20 members of the Mazar Balkh Dry Fruits Processing and Exporter Association on grading, sorting, and packaging dried fruits
- Trained 60 freight-forwarders on international standards of operation in their industry
- Trained and provided work opportunities to 237 students under a capacity-building internship program to build the professional skills of Balkh's future business and government leaders
- Trained employees of the Sadaat Tomato Paste company on administration, finance, and marketing



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- Supported six associations with Association Development Grants for the purchase of office equipment and member training
- Provided assistance in the form of six marketplace development grants contributing to improved conditions and creating more job opportunities
- Supported 13 businesses or organizations with value-chain improvement grants contributing to improving the economy and creating more job and business opportunities
- Trained radio, television, and print journalists on the value of trade and trade issues in order to encourage more and better coverage of trade-related issues

EDUCATION

Goal: Improve the quality of basic education through improved teacher quality and increased availability of primary school textbooks; improve the quality of higher education; improve the livelihoods of urban and rural communities through increased literacy and employability instruction.

Summary: USAID supports educational improvements in Balkh through four national education projects. USAID has provided in-service teacher training (INSET), developed in-school teacher support activities (ITSA), provided radio-based teacher support programs, provided support to local communities through capacity strengthening in partnerships with non-government organizations and Ministry of Education personnel, provided literacy and vocational schools training, printed textbooks, trained education faculty professors, helped in rebuilding the capacity of higher-education institutions, and constructed and/or refurbished schools.

Current Activities:

- Continue INSET 2 training for approximately 6,600 teachers
- Deliver INSET 3 training focused on literacy and numeracy for primary teachers
- Develop accelerated learning materials and implement training of trainers
- Conduct school management training
- Provide radio-based teacher support programs to improve teachers' skills and performance
- Offer the 18-month program in literacy and productive skills to youth and adults
- Support 55 internally displaced population community-based schools, 23 female adult literacy classes, and 14 early childhood classes in area where there are no Ministry of Education schools
- Improve university students' computer skills and promote the use of the Internet through the ANGEL Center for Teaching and Learning at Balkh University
- Work with the faculty of education to improve the teaching skills of professors through training in pedagogy, subject knowledge, computer literacy, English, institutional development, leadership, management, administration, professional attitudes, and teacher standards
- Train primary and secondary school teachers and administrators in modern teaching methods via district-based teacher training teams
- Construct a Faculty of Education at Balkh University
- Continue textbook support
- Provide accelerated learning and remedial education for over-aged females who were denied an education during Taliban rule

Accomplishments:

- Integrated 14 community based education classes into the Ministry of Education system
- Established 609 literacy centers (344 centers for women)



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- Provided an 18-month training course in literacy and productive skills to 14,000 youth and adults (8,200 women)
- Completed teacher-training activities through partnerships with non-government organizations for more than 21,300 teachers and approximately 1,675 trainers
- Broadcasted supplementary radio-based teacher support programs
- Established 458 teacher learning circles in approximately 370 schools
- Developed school improvement plans in 373 schools
- Established 254 school management committees
- Completed more than 9,950 teacher observations during the life of the project
- Established 72 school manager practicum groups for 339 school principals and curricula training for 420 teachers and school directors
- Constructed or refurbished 43 schools
- Printed more than 2.6 million primary education textbooks
- Provided educational opportunities for those with no previous education and increased overall school enrollment
- Increased higher education opportunities by supporting study abroad opportunities and providing English language training
- Extended the nationwide Afghanistan-based Master's of Education program
- Funded computer networking and basic software skills training at the university
- Established a Professional Development Center at the Faculty of Education of Balkh University
- Introduced a teacher standards program and a standards working committee for assessment and validation at the university
- Contributed to youth mobilization through models of youth participation, civic education for reconstruction, and building democracy and development

HEALTH

Goal: Improve the access to and quality of health services and increase the abilities of individuals, families, and communities to protect their health.

Summary: USAID's principal investments in Balkh Province come through nationwide programs, including support for health and family planning products and provision of training courses.

Current Activities:

- Distribute community awareness materials for tuberculosis, diagnostic, treatment and training packages for tuberculosis including a database information system and maintenance equipment for the database
- Support social marketing of health and family planning products (such as contraceptives, water purification agents, and oral rehydration salts for diarrhea) through private sector outlets
- Support a men's health clinic focused on sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS
- Fund the Diseases Early Warning System for 14 routine conditions/diseases in 10 sentinel sites
- Implement a pediatric hospital improvement initiative in the Balkh Provincial Hospital to improve children's healthcare at the hospital level
- Introduce a quality improvement collaborative between hospitals and health facilities to share best practices
- Prepare to launch a community-based midwifery training program to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality and improve mothers' reproductive health



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- Provide technical support for a regional clinical site to strengthen newborn care training
- Train community health worker trainers and community health supervisors, and orient new non-governmental organization staff, to expand the use of post-partum family planning
- Support the Ministry of Public Health to identify and select regional trainers for mental health

Accomplishments:

- Trained roughly 12,800 pharmacists, shura members, and community health workers on safe drinking water, oral rehydration salts, and birth spacing to increase the quality of preventative healthcare

INFRASTRUCTURE

Goal: Improve infrastructure in order to create licit economic opportunities, promote freedom of movement, and facilitate delivery of government and social services.

Summary: The infrastructure program in Balkh Province focuses on the construction of roads, water, and energy, while building the capacity of local workers and supporting the provincial economy using locally available materials.

Current Activities:

- Install components of the Reactive Power Compensation equipment and the National Load Control Center that will enhance the reliability, efficiency, and safety of the North East Power System that transports power from Afghanistan's northern neighbors to meet the energy demand in Kabul and the northeastern areas of the country
- Provide technical assistance to the Ministry of Public Works in maintaining the Balkh to Andkhoy section of the Ring Road using Afghan contractors
- Assess the feasibility of a piped water system to provide potable water supply to Zara District

Accomplishments:

- Completed a wind resource assessment to determine the potential for harnessing wind energy into a source of power for communities outside the power grid
- Improved water management capacity through technical assistance to the Balkh Department of Hydrology and Water Management
- Funded a feasibility study of a water supply system in Alburz District, helping improve access to water for rural villagers
- Replaced the water tower in Mazar-i -Sharif to bring clean water to one of Afghanistan's largest cities
- Reconstructed houses and installed safe water units for returning refugees, providing them with a foundation to begin rebuilding their lives
- Transferred the assets, liabilities, employees, and all rights and obligations of the Balkh branch of the Central Authority for Water Supply and Sewerage to a new corporation (Afghan Urban Water Supply & Sanitation Corporation) that will lead to better water and sanitation services for the people of Balkh
- Rehabilitated two bridges, nine farm-to-market roads, two district center roads, and one district road, with a total length of 31 km, facilitating travel and movement of goods and services

STABILIZATION

Goal: Improve stability, extend the reach of the Afghan government, and promote stabilization efforts that lay the groundwork for medium- to long-term development activities.



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Summary: USAID creates linkages and builds confidence between communities and the local government through small-scale infrastructure, training, and community development projects.

Current Activities:

- Support community-level labor intensive programs that improve city infrastructure, support community development priorities, and offer temporary employment (wages earned through these public and community works projects enable the poor to purchase food for themselves and their families)
- Support the purchase of school furniture, a 5 km road gravel project and construction of five culverts in Charbolak District and a 7 km road gravel project in Balkh District

Accomplishments:

- Rehabilitated three roads, two bridges, 60 culverts, one retaining wall, and one protection wall, thereby reducing the threat from floods, shortening travel time, and providing increased access to economic opportunities
- Provided technical advisors to the Department of Economy, the Department of Women Affairs and the Department of Information and Culture
- Provided capacity building training to the Provincial Development Council
- Provided commodities and renovations as needed to provincial government facilities
- Provided technical assistance and training support to the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority regional office in Mazari Sharif
- Promoted conflict mitigation efforts in Nahr-e-Shahi and Sholgar districts
- Implemented a skill development and literacy program in Chimtal district
- Constructed community infrastructure, including school buildings and a water pipe scheme
- Rehabilitated a burned school, a community clinic and constructed an enclosure wall
- Planted trees to improve soil erosion
- Painted a teacher training facility
- Helped 5,000 people through community-level labor intensive programs that improve city infrastructure, support community development priorities, and offer temporary employment